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Multilingualism

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Multilingualism

The General Assembly,

Recognizing that multilingualism contributes to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations, as set out in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recognizing also that the United Nations pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally,

Recognizing further, in this regard, that genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding, and recognizing the importance of the capacity to communicate to the peoples of the world in their own languages, including in formats accessible to persons with disabilities,

Stressing the need for strict observance of the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the different bodies and organs of the United Nations,

Recalling that Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are both the official and the working languages of the General Assembly, including its committees and subcommittees,[1] and of the Security Council,[2] that Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the official languages and English, French

[1] Rule 51 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.
[2] Rule 41 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council.

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and Spanish the working languages of the Economic and Social Council,[3] and that English and French are the working languages of the Secretariat,[4]

Emphasizing the importance of multilingualism in the activities of the United Nations, including those linked to public relations and information,

Recalling its resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, by which it adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[5] in particular article 27 thereof, concerning the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities,

Recalling also its resolutions 2 (I) of 1 February 1946, 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 42/207 C of 11 December 1987 and 50/11 of 2 November 1995, and other subsequent resolutions relating to multilingualism, including resolutions 65/311 of 19 July 2011, 66/294 of 17 September 2012, 66/297 of 17 September 2012, 67/124 B of 18 December 2012, 67/237 of 24 December 2012 and 67/255 of 12 April 2013,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;[6]

I. Multilingualism in general and the role of the Secretariat

2. *Emphasizes* the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations;

3. *Underlines* the need for full implementation of the resolutions establishing language arrangements for the official languages of the United Nations and the working languages of the Secretariat;

4. *Also underlines* the responsibility of the Secretariat in integrating multilingualism into its activities, from within existing resources, on an equitable basis;

5. *Welcomes*, in this regard, the continuation of the functions of Coordinator for Multilingualism within the Secretariat, and calls upon all Departments and Offices within the Secretariat to support the work of the Coordinator;

6. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General to continue to develop the network of focal points supporting the Coordinator for Multilingualism in effectively and consistently implementing relevant resolutions throughout the Secretariat, and invites the Secretary-General, through his role in the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to support a coordinated approach on multilingualism within the United Nations system, taking into consideration the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on multilingualism;[7]

7. *Welcomes* the implementation, within the United Nations, of a day dedicated to each of the official languages in order to inform and raise awareness of

[3] Rule 32 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council.
[4] Resolution 2 (I).
[5] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.
[6] A/67/311.
[7] A/67/78.

their history, culture and use, encourages the Secretary-General to further strengthen this approach in a cost-neutral manner, if needed through the participation of partner organizations, including Member States and institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and also encourages the Secretary-General to consider extending this important initiative to other non-official languages spoken throughout the world;

8. *Also welcomes* the efforts made by international organizations based on a shared language to increase their cooperation with the United Nations regarding multilingualism;

9. *Further welcomes* the activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Member States, entities of the United Nations system, other international organizations and all other participating bodies aimed at fostering respect for and the promotion and protection of all languages, in particular endangered ones, linguistic diversity and multilingualism;

10. *Reaffirms* that linguistic diversity is an important element of cultural diversity, stresses the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions,[8] which entered into force on 18 March 2007, and recalls the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace of 15 October 2003;[9]

II. Role of the Department of Public Information in multilingualism

11. *Emphasizes* the importance of making use of all the official languages of the United Nations, ensuring their full and equitable treatment in all the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, with the aim of eliminating the disparity between the use of English and the use of the five other official languages, and in this regard reaffirms its request that the Secretary-General ensure that the Department has the necessary staffing capacity in all the official languages to undertake all of its activities;

12. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to use other languages in addition to the official languages when appropriate, according to the targeted audience, with a view to reaching the widest possible spectrum of audiences and extending the United Nations message to all the corners of the world, in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization;

13. *Welcomes* the work carried out by the United Nations information centres, including the United Nations Regional Information Centre, in favour of the publication of United Nations information materials and the translation of important documents into languages other than the official languages of the United Nations, with a view to reaching the widest possible audience and extending the United Nations message to all corners of the world in order to strengthen international

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[8] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-third Session, Paris, 3-21 October 2005*, vol.1 and corrigenda: *Resolutions*, chap. V, resolution 41.

[9] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-second Session, Paris, 29 September-17 October 2003*, vol. 1: *Resolutions*, chap. IV, recommendation 41.

support for the activities of the Organization, and encourages United Nations information centres to continue their important multilingual activities in the interactive and proactive aspects of their work, in particular by arranging seminars and debates to further the spread of information, understanding and the exchange of views regarding United Nations activities at the local and regional level;

14. *Also welcomes* the sustained effort to disseminate information globally by use of official and non-official languages and traditional means of communication, and in this regard expresses its particular appreciation for the work currently being carried out by United Nations Radio in the six official languages, as well as non-official languages;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to ensure that, in view of their income-generating nature, guided tours at United Nations Headquarters are consistently available in all six official languages of the United Nations;

16. *Welcomes* the initiative of the Secretary-General to also offer guided tours at United Nations Headquarters in non-official languages;

17. *Notes* with interest the cost-neutral initiatives of the Secretariat to produce publications in official and non-official languages, to increase the volume of translated publications and to encourage a multilingual acquisition policy for the libraries of the United Nations, and requests the Secretariat to continue those initiatives;

III. Websites and other web-based communication tools

18. *Reaffirms* the need to achieve full parity among the six official languages on all United Nations websites, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General to include in his upcoming report on multilingualism a comprehensive review of the United Nations websites, including content discrepancies among official languages, as well as to identify innovative ideas, potential synergies and other cost-neutral measures to achieve full parity among the six official languages;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his upcoming report on multilingualism a comprehensive review of United Nations websites, presenting the status of content in non-official languages, as well as identifying innovative ideas, potential synergies and other cost-neutral measures to reinforce the broader multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations websites, as appropriate;

20. *Urges* the Secretary-General to strengthen his efforts to develop, maintain and update multilingual United Nations websites and the web page of the Secretary-General in all the official languages of the United Nations, from within existing resources and on an equitable basis;

21. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure, while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate website, the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations website among all six official languages, with full respect for the needs and specificities of all six languages;

22. *Notes with concern* that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations website in certain official languages has improved at a much slower rate than expected, and in this regard requests the Department of Public Information, in coordination with content-providing offices, to advance actions to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations website, in particular by expediting the filling of vacant posts in some sections;

23. *Takes note* of sections II.D and II.E of the report of the Secretary-General,[10] requests the Secretary-General to continue his ongoing efforts in this regard, and urges all content-providing offices in the Secretariat to strengthen their efforts to translate into all official languages all English-language materials and databases posted on the United Nations website in the most practical, efficient and cost-effective manner, from within existing resources;

24. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Office of Information and Communications Technology of the Secretariat, to continue its efforts to ensure that technological infrastructures and supportive applications fully support Latin, non-Latin and bidirectional scripts in order to enhance the equality of all official languages on the United Nations website;

25. *Welcomes* the cooperative arrangements undertaken by the Department of Public Information with academic institutions to increase the number of web pages available in official and non-official languages, and requests the Secretary-General, in coordination with content-providing offices, to extend such cooperative arrangements, in a cost-effective manner, to all the official languages of the United Nations, bearing in mind the necessity of adherence to United Nations standards and guidelines;

26. *Underlines* the importance of the implementation of new communication tools, such as social networks, in order to take into account the linguistic dimension and to assure full parity among the official languages of the Organization;

27. *Urges* the Secretariat to keep iSeek up to date in the two working languages of the Secretariat, to continue its efforts to implement iSeek at all duty stations and to develop and implement cost-neutral measures to provide Member States with secure access to the information currently accessible only on the Intranet of the Secretariat;

IV. Documentation and conference services

28. *Reiterates* its request to the Secretary-General to complete the task of uploading all important older United Nations documents onto the United Nations website in all six official languages on a priority basis so that those archives are also made available to Member States through that medium;

29. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to ensure, through the provision of documentation services and meetings and publishing services under conference management, including high-quality translation and interpretation, effective multilingual communication equally in all the official languages of the United Nations among representatives of Member States in intergovernmental organs and among members of United Nations expert bodies;

[10] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 19* (A/66/19).

30. *Reiterates with concern* its request that the Secretary-General ensure that the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in all six official languages are strictly respected as regards both the distribution of printed copies and the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System and the United Nations website, in accordance with section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 55/222 of 23 December 2000;

31. *Underlines* that all the initiatives on the evolution of the working methods, including those introduced on a trial basis, shall comply with the principle of parity among the official languages of the Organization, with a view to preserving or enhancing the quality and scope of the services provided by the Secretariat;

V. Human resources management and staff training

32. *Recalls* its resolution 67/255, in particular paragraph 35 thereof, in which it reaffirmed the need to respect the equality of the two working languages of the Secretariat, reaffirmed the use of additional working languages in specific duty stations as mandated, and in that regard requested the Secretary-General to ensure that vacancy announcements specified the need for either of the working languages of the Secretariat, unless the functions of the post required a specific working language;

33. *Notes with satisfaction* the willingness of the Secretariat to encourage staff members, in meetings with interpretation services, to use any of the six official languages of which they have a command;

34. *Encourages* United Nations staff members to continue to actively use existing training facilities to acquire and enhance their proficiency in one or more of the official languages of the United Nations;

35. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue the efforts to ensure that training opportunities in the six official languages are equally available to all staff;

36. *Recalls* section II, paragraph 17, of its resolution 61/244 of 22 December 2006, in which it acknowledged that the interaction of the United Nations with the local population in the field was essential and that language skills constituted an important element of the selection and training processes and therefore affirmed that a good command of the official language(s) spoken in the country of residence should be taken into account as an additional asset during those processes;

37. *Stresses* that the employment of staff shall continue to be carried out in strict accordance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and in line with the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions;

38. *Invites* the Secretary-General to ensure compliance with the requirement for United Nations staff to have the ability to use one of the working languages of the Secretariat, and encourages the Secretary-General to further the implementation of resolution 2480 B (XXIII);

39. *Also invites* the Secretary-General to take the appropriate measures to consider the linguistic specificities mentioned in vacancy announcements during the composition of interview panels for the employment of United Nations staff;

40. *Stresses* that the promotion of staff in the Professional and higher categories shall be carried out in strict accordance with Article 101 of the Charter and in line with the provisions of resolution 2480 B (XXIII) and the relevant provisions of resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001;

VI. Language services staff

41. *Recalls* its resolution 66/233 of 24 December 2011, in particular paragraph 7 of section III thereof, and reiterates its request that the Secretary-General ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of services, with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages, and in that regard recalls section D, paragraph 11, of its resolution 54/248 of 23 December 1999;

42. *Acknowledges* the measures undertaken by the Secretary-General, in accordance with its resolutions, to address the issue of the replacement of retiring staff in the language services, and requests the Secretary-General to maintain and intensify those efforts, including through the strengthening of cooperation with institutions that train language specialists to meet the needs in the six official languages of the United Nations;

VII. Field offices and peacekeeping operations

43. *Stresses* the importance of proposing United Nations information, technical assistance and training materials, whenever possible, in the local languages of the beneficiary countries, including through locally-based United Nations websites;

44. *Recalls* its resolution 66/297, in which it endorsed the proposals, recommendations and conclusions of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations;[1]

45. *Takes note* of section II.D.1 of the report of the Secretary-General, requests the Secretary-General to continue his ongoing efforts in this regard, and recalls its resolution 66/297 without prejudice to Article 101 of the Charter;

46. *Urges* the Secretariat to translate all peacekeeping training documents into the six official languages of the United Nations, from within existing resources, to enable and facilitate their use by all Member States, troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries, in particular, and by other involved institutions;

47. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, at its sixty-ninth session, a comprehensive report on the full implementation of its resolutions on multilingualism;

48. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-ninth session the item entitled "Multilingualism".

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[1] Ibid., paras. 16-289.